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Summary record of the 11th meeting
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Chairman: Mr. Wenaweser ..... (Liechtenstein)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 97: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/57/115)

Agenda item 98: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/57/3, A/57/67-E/2002/45, A/57/139 and Corr.1, A/57/218 and Corr.1 and A/57/352; A/C.3/57/L.6; E/CN.5/2002/2)

Agenda item 99: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/57/93)

1. **Ms. Loemban Tobing-Klein** (Suriname) conveyed her country's condolences to Her Majesty Queen Beatrix, her family, the Government and the people of the Netherlands on the death of his Royal Highness Prince Claus.

2. She said that too many people in the world, above all in developing countries, were living below the poverty line in conditions which constantly violated their human rights. Everyone had the right to live in dignity, peace and harmony with the environment. Governments had promised that a number of targets, including the halving of poverty, would be achieved by 2015 and they, together with civil society and non-governmental partners, should ensure that those promises were kept. It was, however, also the responsibility of the international community to provide developing countries with at least 0.7 per cent of their GDP, so that the Monterrey Consensus and the millennium development goals could be implemented.

3. Until 1980, Suriname had been classified as relatively developed, but in the intervening 20 years the economic position of the country had weakened, and realization of the goals of the Government's social and economic programme had become difficult. Women, children and older persons had suffered most as a result. The social-development policy of the Surinamese Government was chiefly based on the improvement of the social well-being of the entire nation. Social development lay at the core of the overall sustainable development of a country and was therefore the responsibility of all the relevant actors in society. In response to the recommendations made at the Second World Assembly on Ageing, her Government was striving to improve the lives of older persons by raising their income and facilitating their access to health care, education and social and cultural activities. The population of Suriname, as in other developing countries, was growing older, and her Government was running programmes which alerted even young people to the issue. It therefore applauded the work done by the United Nations in the area of social development and was in favour of appointing a special rapporteur on ageing.

4. Her Government had formulated a strategy to integrate disabled persons into society in pursuance of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. At the same time, it acknowledged that children, the future of the country, needed education. The latter was therefore a priority in her Government's development strategy. Her country intended to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family by organizing lectures, awareness programmes and information sessions.

5. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was fully aware that, as a group of countries, it had to create an environment ensuring the human and social development of its peoples in a sustainable manner, and it had therefore established the Council for Human and Social Development, where policy makers of all CARICOM countries met in order to address issues of common interest. CARICOM had also embarked on a human-development strategy, and Suriname was fully committed to its common goals and principles. Similarly, CARICOM had drawn up a human-resource strategy focusing on education in order to upgrade the basic knowledge of young people, and was alert to the need to give consideration to health care, the fight against drugs and rising unemployment.

6. Her Government was committed to eradicating poverty, promoting productive employment and enhancing social integration in order to improve the social conditions and lives of the people of her country. Hence it applauded the appointment of a special envoy on the implementation of the millennium development goals and of an executive coordinator of the millennium development-goals campaign.

7. **Mr. Kadri** (Morocco) noted that, notwithstanding the efforts of Governments, international institutions and civil society, a very large proportion of the world

population was still living in poverty because of adverse economic conditions. Although Morocco was itself a developing country, it believed that the international community should support disadvantaged countries, above all those in Africa, and it had therefore cancelled the debt of the least developed African countries and had lifted all customs barriers to those countries' exports to Morocco.

8. His country was striving to meet its national and international commitments in the sphere of social development by improving its population's access to basic social services and promoting employment and income-generating activities, so as to foster the social integration of vulnerable sections of the population and combat poverty. Its strategy encouraged a culture of solidarity through the setting-up of foundations to promote social welfare and combat social exclusion. To that end, the Government was allocating a substantial share of its budget to the social sector, and several social programmes had been established as a result.

9. The Government had established programmes to expand the labour market, stimulate the private sector, offer loans on easy terms to young entrepreneurs and support the creation of firms in an attempt to reduce unemployment. Morocco would be hosting the 2003 World Youth Congress, which would focus on ways in which young people could back the efforts of the United Nations and Member States to achieve the millennium development goals.

10. As a contribution to preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, his country had drafted a national charter on family policy designed to improve the situation of Moroccan families. It also welcomed the adoption of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing and, being alive to the implications of an increase in the elderly population, the Government had drafted a national action plan to protect older persons, which took account of religious, historical and sociocultural factors and set out to reaffirm the role of the elderly in the transmission of knowledge and experience and to integrate them into society. Furthermore, in accordance with its international commitments, Morocco had submitted a national report on ageing which highlighted the demographic, social and economic situation of older people and analysed the achievements of the Government and associations in those spheres, the difficulties encountered in meeting certain targets and the main thrust of national policy in the future.

11. The Government included a minister with special responsibility for the status of women, the protection of the family and children and the integration of the disabled. The political will to ensure equal opportunities for the disabled was reflected in the implementation of a national plan of action to integrate the disabled and government measures to raise society's awareness of the problems of the disabled. Furthermore, the drive to reduce illiteracy was one of the Government's top priorities, and a national charter on education and training aimed at reforming the national education system had been adopted in 1999.

12. His delegation was concerned by the serious deterioration in the economic, social and humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people as a consequence of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. It was the duty of the international community to shoulder its responsibilities in order to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and to persuade Israel to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions and with international humanitarian law.

13. The conferences and special sessions organized by the United Nations since the Copenhagen Summit had been largely prompted by the commitments made in the sphere of social development. It was hence incumbent upon the international community and developed countries to make additional efforts to achieve targets and meet deadlines so as to ensure that the whole world population had a decent life. Solidarity among the different components of international society was vital.

14 **Mr. Koren** (Israel) said that his country supported preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. It also backed the international community's new initiative to protect and promote the rights of people with disabilities. It therefore welcomed the work of the Ad Hoc Committee dealing with that issue and was following its progress with great interest. His country attributed great importance to the outcome of the Second World Assembly on Ageing because the world was facing two main challenges: how to deal with the exceptional levels of ageing common in the developed world and how the developing world could find a way to face those challenges suited to its own cultural, economic and social circumstances. The momentous global changes of recent years meant that wealth had come to be determined by knowledge, and therefore nations which possessed specialized expertise must be willing

to cooperate with others to facilitate social development.

15. Israel was endeavouring to promote social development while carrying the burden of security and absorbing new immigrants. In addition, it faced the same social problems as other countries. Despite those combined difficulties, Israel had established a welfare state capable of serving an ever-expanding percentage of its population and was eager to share its experiences with many countries struggling to achieve social development despite meagre resources.

16. It was accomplishing that through MASHAV, Israel's Centre for International Cooperation. Nearly all of MASHAV's programmes served to enhance international cooperation for social or sustainable development, and therefore contributed to the meeting of commitments accepted at the World Summit for Social Development. Some nations were paying a harsh price for changes in the global economy and, especially in agricultural societies, the elderly were being forced out of jobs they had held for a long time. In order to reverse that trend, Israel had initiated some special programmes to preserve employment and bolster services for the elderly. MASHAV had also designed an international course on the management of family and community services, and had run other programmes specifically focusing on the family's role in education, health and welfare. In order to address the growing need to assist persons with disabilities, MASHAV offered an international course on psychological and physical rehabilitation in the community. His delegation hoped that those projects would enhance social development and respect the central principle of the World Summit for Social Development that the human being remained the prime focus of global development.

17. **Ms. Colonne** (Sri Lanka), said that, despite the various declarations and commitments, poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance and injustice still afflicted the peoples of the developing world, owing principally to the lack of resources.

18. Sri Lanka had taken an active interest in the recent United Nations initiatives and was firmly committed to improving social development at the national level, while supporting the corresponding global efforts. The country was rated low in terms of economic growth, but high in terms of the human development it had achieved for its people. Successive Governments had reflected a firm conviction that social development, social integration and social justice went beyond the physical well-being of the individual and required strengthening of the democratic and legal framework of society.

19. Sri Lanka had achieved a 90 per cent literacy rate for both boys and girls as well as adults. Over 95 per cent of children completed primary school, and the country reaffirmed its commitment to achieving the goals of the forthcoming United Nations Literacy Decade. Since the recent peace initiative, the Government had pledged to increase the annual budget for education and launch a programme to enable young people to acquire essential skills for employment in the information age.

20. Sri Lanka welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/57/93). Recent declines in mortality and fertility had led to an increase in the number of older persons. Sri Lanka had already addressed that issue many years earlier, and, following the 1982 Vienna Plan of Action on Ageing, had introduced a number of far-reaching measures for the welfare of older persons.

21. The family played a vital role in Sri Lankan society. Yet, the existence of traditional families and extended family systems was being threatened; family problems were increasing throughout the world and Sri Lanka was no exception. It therefore looked forward to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and welcomed the Secretary-General's report (A/57/139).

22. Policy formulation had always been much easier than policy implementation. The achievement of the millennium development goals involved shared responsibilities and worldwide cooperation. The development, stability and fulfilment of all peoples was in the interests of everyone in both the developing and the developed countries.

23. **Ms. Mahouve Same** (Cameroon), said that the World Summit for Social Development had shown the international community's determination to give social development priority. At recent world conferences, poverty had remained a fundamental concern. Its reduction being essential for development, African leaders had established the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), through which they committed themselves to improving public administration and management of the economy. Social

conditions in developing countries, and particularly in Africa, remained precarious, however, despite the efforts to honour the commitments made at the Copenhagen Summit.

24. Poverty continued to increase in most African countries, and the situation was made worse by the spread of HIV/AIDS and other endemic diseases, the deterioration of both health and education services, the external debt and armed conflict. The eradication of poverty should be the focus of the international community's efforts to promote social development and it should endeavour to provide additional resources to assist the developing countries. Cameroon called on the developed countries to fulfil their commitment to contribute 0.7 per cent of their gross national product as official development assistance. It therefore welcomed the proposal to establish a world solidarity fund, to be managed by the United Nations Development Programme.

25. Cameroon had already made substantial advances towards development. Nonetheless, despite the progress achieved and its admission to the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative, its economic and financial situation remained very vulnerable, more than half the population lived in poverty and it had serious concerns about the effects of globalization.

26. Her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/57/115), as well as the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee to draft an international convention on the rights of the disabled and the recommendations of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002.

27. **Mr. Nsemi** (Congo), noted that the Copenhagen Summit had placed the individual at the focal point of development and had examined the essential issues related to social development. Seven years later and following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the international community was increasingly convinced of the importance of promoting social development, because it was not possible to counter terrorism without combating poverty, inequality and social exclusion.

28. Several delegations had already underscored the growing gap between the wealthy countries and the rest of the world, and the factors which continued to jeopardize the development of the poorest countries. His delegation supported the Monterrey Consensus and the reform of the international financial system so as to mobilize resources to implement the Copenhagen commitments.

29. Now that peace had returned to the region, the Congo intended to strive towards social development. In the context of its interim post-conflict plan and with United Nations assistance, it would be promoting education and training. Given the essential role of the family, it recognized the importance of developing long-term policies and programmes in favour of families. It commended the growing interest of United Nations agencies in family-related issues and, within the framework of the African Union, would be taking part in the 2003 regional meeting to draft an African family charter.

30. His Government was deeply concerned about the situation of the disabled and determined to integrate them more fully into society. The Congo also supported the work of the Ad Hoc Committee responsible for elaborating an international convention on the rights and dignity of the disabled. Lastly, it was aware of the challenge posed by ageing populations, particularly in the developing countries, and supported the International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002. Social development had to be a collective effort, pooling resources and commitment towards a new world order characterized by responsibility and solidarity.

31. **Ms. Aristaputri** (Indonesia) said that the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action set out three major areas where progress was needed: the eradication of poverty, the expansion of productive employment and the reduction of unemployment, and social integration. The millennium development goals were largely derived from the Copenhagen Programme of Action.

32. However, of the world population of six billion, one billion people, mostly in developing countries, still lived in poverty, while another billion, principally in the developed world, enjoyed previously unimaginable prosperity. The remaining four billion people were struggling to attain development, but were highly vulnerable, owing to the current global economic slowdown. The international community should therefore strive to create the political and economic environment for social development first proposed at Copenhagen, because, even though it required appropriate national social and economic policies,

international cooperation was also needed to mobilize resources for development through free trade, market access, investment, debt relief and increased financial flows.

33. Developing countries understood their responsibilities and were making sincere efforts to achieve progress for their people, but their resources were extremely limited. Official development assistance was almost at its lowest point in percentage terms at 0.2 per cent of donor countries' gross national product (GNP), compared to their commitment to provide 0.7 per cent of GNP. Nevertheless, some progress was being made. At the International Conference on Financing for Development, held at Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002, donor countries had made commitments that would increase aid by $12 billion a year. Although a step in the right direction, it was short of the $50 billion required to meet the goal of halving the level of extreme poverty worldwide. The recent World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg had taken another step in the right direction when it had tried to identify specific impediments to achieving the goals and had established concrete plans for attaining them.

34. **Mr. Hyassat** (Jordan), speaking on items 98 and 99, said that his Government had enacted a law to protect the family and improve the status of women and children. A national conference was to be held to examine the situation of the Jordanian family in the light of the various changes that affected it, including family violence.

35. His Government was striving to reduce the national illiteracy rate to 5 per cent by 2010, and to eliminate it by 2015. It was also offering occupational training programmes for young people. A higher youth council had been formed to strengthen youth-oriented objectives. Moreover, agreements had been reached with foreign youth associations on such matters as cultural, tourist and sports exchanges.

36. Jordan's approach to the question of ageing accorded with Islamic teachings and Arab tradition, which encouraged respect to older people and parents. The Government, which had supported the decisions adopted by the Second World Assembly on Ageing, was striving to keep older people within their family settings. A national committee for the welfare of the elderly had been formed, emphasizing that they represented a valuable resource.

37. His Government was also giving special attention to the disabled. It had adopted a law inspired by Arab and Islamic values and had endorsed the relevant international documents that offered assistance to the disabled. A national council had been established to strengthen their rights and to afford them assistance. His delegation also endorsed the decisions of the Ad Hoc Committee on the drafting of a convention on the rights of people with disabilities.

38. **Mr. Haqati** (Kuwait), speaking on items 97 and 98, stressed the importance of fighting poverty and raising living standards in order to realize the millennium development goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015. Responding to that challenge was the joint responsibility of developed and developing countries.

39. Given the importance of sharing responsibilities and the links between social and economic policies, the Government of Kuwait offered many countries material assistance in order to strengthen their social and economic development. That was done through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, and nearly 100 countries throughout the world had benefited from it.

40. In the light of the importance of the human factor in development, civilized societies had started paying attention to people with disabilities, who had much to offer in all development fields.

41. In that context, the Arab countries, on the basis of Islamic values and the preservation of human dignity, had set out to help those with special needs. A conference on disabled persons in the Arab world was currently being held in Beirut with a view to inaugurating an Arab decade for the disabled.

42. Kuwait had created a higher council for the disabled which helped to oversee a number of public and private institutions and to provide for the needs of the disabled. A special committee had also been constituted in order to facilitate their social integration. Kuwait also favoured the elaboration of a comprehensive convention to reinforce the rights and dignity of disabled persons.

43. Many obstacles stood in the way of social and economic development, the most important of which were wars and political instability, as illustrated by the Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories as well as inter-African strife. Kuwait believed in the

close connection between peace and development. It also believed that compliance by all parties with United Nations resolutions on development would reinforce national progress.

44. **Mr. Husain** (Observer, Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)), speaking on item 98, said that the family was the basic social unit in any society and should be strengthened. Therefore, the major research activity described in the Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the International Year of the Family in 2004 (E/CN.5/2002/2, para. 14), which was designed to identify regional trends that appeared to have the greatest influence on families and analyse their causes, was of considerable interest to OIC. It hoped that the study would cover developments throughout the world, including the member States and observer States of OIC, which represented a quarter of the world's population, and would take into account the social, cultural and religious values of different societies and their impact on the family.

45. Major social changes were occurring globally, including the ageing of the world's population, which affected the status and socio-economic situation of families. When such factors as immigration and displacement due to conflicts, rising levels of poverty and globalization were added, national capacity to introduce viable social protection measures was jeopardized. Nevertheless, development programmes should include the family perspective, and the interests of the family should be given priority in all planning in order to ensure a wholesome social environment.

46. To that end, a declaration in support of the family by the head of State could initiate a national commitment and send out a powerful signal to all sectors of government and society. A similar commitment at the international level could be fostered by a declaration or convention in support of the family and its rights and obligations, in particular the role of parents. In that respect, OIC reiterated its proposal that the international community should designate an annual day to honour parents.

47. A national coordination mechanism for the family could be considered a complimentary institutional measure to harmonize governmental and non-governmental policies, plans and programmes in support of the family. Such mechanisms already existed in several countries and played a pivotal role in enhancing the interests of the family. They also provided an opportunity to exchange experience and know-how among developing countries. A multiplicity of national and local family-related services and programmes would be developed as part of the activities for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004. OIC expressed its firm belief in an interactive family-sensitive approach to development strategies, which lent credibility to the view that the family deserved the strongest possible support.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.